

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2227

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 6129

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, IR, TR

SUBJ: GREEK AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES BITSIOS' VISIT TO IRAN

REF: ATHENS 4683

1. ON JUNE 25 GREEK AMBASSADOR ECONOMOU GAVE POLCOUNS RUNDOWN ON RECENT VISIT HERE OF GRK FONMIN BITSIOS. HE SAID MAIN OBJECT OF VISIT HAD NOT BEEN TO CONCLUDE SPECIFIC ECON/ FINANCIAL AGREEMENTS AS LOCAL PRESS HAD CLAIMED BUT TO BEGIN PROCESS OF WARMING UP RELATIONS WHICH HAD BEEN CHILLY IN RECENT YEARS, PARTICULARLY SINCE REFERENDUM DEPOSED KING CONSTANTINE. NO NEW DEPARTURES HAD BEEN EXPECTED AND NONE OCCURED, ECONOMOU SAID, BUT BOTH SIDES FEEL VISIT WAS SUCCESSFUL AS GET-AC-QUAINTED AND GOODWILL EFFORT. THERE HAD BEEN FAR LESS LOCAL PUBLICITY ABOUT BITSIOS' VISIT THAN ABOUT SIMILAR VISITS RECENTLY, BUT GREEKS UNDERSTOOD NECESSAITY TO PLAY IT IN LOW KEY BECAUSE OF IRAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH TURKEY. ECONOMOU EXPECTS THAT WHEN GREEK-TURKISH TROUBLES SUBSIDE GREECE WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP REALLY CLOSE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH IRAN.

2. DURING BITSIOS' AUDIENCE WITH SHAH WHICH ECONOMOU AND FONMIN KHALATBARY ALSO ATTENDED, SHAH EXPRESSED KEEN INTEREST IN
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IMPROVING ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES

BUT SPECIFICS WERE NOT DISCUSSED. BITSIOS BRIEFED SHAH ON PROSPECTS FOR GREEK INTEGRATION INTO EEC FASTER THAN ORIGINAL SCHEDULE CALLED FOR (HE THOUGH RESPONSE OF EEC TO GREEK REQUEST WAS ENCOURAGING AND THAT INTEGRATION MIGHT BE COMPLETED BY ABOUT 1980). ON GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS, BITSIOS TOLD SHAH HE RECOGNIZED REASON FOR IRANIAN STAND ON CYPRUS ISSUE, SINCE IRAN HAS CENTO, GEOGRAPHIC AND RELIGIOUS LINKS WITH TURKEY, AND GREEKS DO NOT EXPECT IRAN TO TAKE POSITION DAMAGING TO THESE TIES. BUT IRAN IS ALSO INTERESTED IN STABILITY OF ENTIRE AREA, INCLUDING EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, AND IN THIS CONTEXT BITSIOS HOPED IRAN WOULD SUPPORT EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY. HE DID NOT ASK SHAH TO MEDIATE IN DISPUTE.

3. DISCUSSION WITH KHALATBARY WAS IN TWO PARTS: EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON RELATIONS WITH EUROPE, BALKANS, ARAB COUNTRIES AND TURKEY; AND AIRING OF BILATERAL ISSUES, INCLUDING FURTHER, BUT STILL NOT VERY SPECIFIC, EXPLORATION OF POSSIBLE AREAS OF ECONOMIC COLLABORATION.

4. BITSIOS AND DELEGATION LATER MET WITH MINCOMMERCE MAHDAVI ON WAYS TO EXPAND BILATERAL TRADE, WITH MINHOUSING ANSARI ON GREEK DESIRE TO PLAY LARGER ROLE IN BOOMING ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES IN IRAN, AND MIN- INFORMATION AND TOURISM WITH WHOM THEY DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY OF GREECE PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN IRANIAN TOURIST DEVELOPMENT.

5. BITSIOS ALSO HAD BRIEF MEETING WITH PRIMIN HOVEYDA WHICH, AS ATHENS NEWS AGENCY CORRECTLY REPORTED (REFTEL), WAS NOT IN ORIGINAL PROGRAM. EMBASSY TEHRAN, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT INTERPRET THIS LAST-MINUTE ADDITION AS HAVING SIGNIFICANCE GIVEN IT BY "POLITICAL OBSERVERS" QUOTED; IN POINT OF FACT, HOVEYDA RETURNED AHEAD OF SCHEDULE FROM POLITICAL CAMPAIGN TRIP TO PROVINCES AND FOUND HE COULD RECEIVE BITSIOS.
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